

They are at different levels of good and evil

The jinn are of different varieties; some of them are fully devoted to doing good and righteousness; others are less so. Some of them are heedless; others are outright disbelievers and they are by far the majority. Allah says, concerning those who listened to the Quran,

وَأَنَا مِنَّا الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنَّا دُونَ ذَلِكَ كُنَّا طَرَائِقَ قَدَدًا

“And among us there are righteous folk and among us there are some that are far from that. We are sects having differences” (*al-Jinn* 11). In other words, some of them are completely pious, some are less so and so on. They are of different ways and thoughts like the human beings.

Allah also states about them, quoting them,

وَأَنَا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَمِنَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ فَأُولَئِكَ تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا

وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا ﴿١٤﴾

“And there are among us some who have surrendered to Allah and there are among us some who are unjust. And whoso has surrendered to Allah, such, have taken the right path purposefully. And as for those who are unjust, they are firewood for hell” (*al-Jinn* 14-15). In other words, some of them are Muslims and some have wronged their own souls by being unbelievers. Whoever submitted has set himself upon the path of guidance by his actions and whosoever among them wronged their own souls will be fuel for the hell-fire.

The nature of Satan

Allah gave the jinn the ability to become believers or disbelievers. Thereby, Satan used to worship Allah along with the angels

before he became an ingrate. When he became such, he became pleased with evil and sought it even though it would be the cause of his punishment. He was pleased by the performance of evil and encouraged others to perform evil deeds.

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

“He [Satan] said, ‘Then, by Your might, I will surely beguile them, everyone, save your single-mu ded slaves among them’ (*Saud 82-83*).

The same is the case with a human. If his soul becomes evil, he desires what harms him and becomes gratified by such actions; in fact, he becomes passionately in love with such things to the extent that he ruins his mind, religion, character, body and wealth. It is sufficient to consider, as examples, those who drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes. These things kill the one who consumes them. They are sufficient to cause the person’s death yet the person is not able to leave them save through hardship.

Can a devil embrace Islam?

It is apparent from the hadith¹ that it is possible for a devil to embrace Islam as the devil of the Prophet (peace be upon him) did so. Some scholars, though, reject this statement and state that a devil cannot become a believer. The commentator of *al-Aqeeda al-Tahaawiya* is of the latter opinion. The people of this school argue that the word *aslām* [mentioned in the hadith concerning the submission of the Prophet’s devil] means that the devil submitted to the laws of Islam [without any belief or faith]. Some scholars say that the correct narration of the hadith is the Prophet (peace be on him) saying, “I am safe from him.” The commentator on *al-Tahaawiya* is of the opinion that the narration putting the word *aslām* in the nominative case is a mistake; but

¹ The hadith that states that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) was helped by Allah over his devil and that his devil submitted and only ordered him to good *shall be presented later*.

al-Nawawi, in his commentary to *Sahih Muslim*, states, “They are two well-confirmed narrations.” He states that al-Khattaabi thinks that the stronger narration is with the *dhamma* (that is, with the word in its nominative form).

From among those who say that a devil can embrace Islam is ibn Hibban. Commenting on the hadith referred to above, he stated, “In this report there is evidence that the devil of the Prophet (peace be upon him) embraced Islam and he did not incite the Prophet (peace be upon him) to do anything but good deeds. Otherwise, the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) was safe from him even if the devil were a disbeliever.”

There is some doubt concerning the opinion of the commentator on *al-Aqeeda al-Tahaawiya* that a devil can only be an unbeliever. If he means that the word devil is only used for the disbelievers of the jinn, then his opinion is correct. But if he means a devil can never change and convert to Islam, then his opinion is far from correct and the hadith is an evidence against him.’

¹ From a *Shariah* point of view, it does not seem sound that the disbelieving jinn are responsible for their actions and, at the same time, they are not able to embrace Islam. They are only to be punished if the message reaches them and they reject the message. This, in itself, implies that they have the freedom to be believers or disbelievers. Hence, they certainly can become Muslims if they so will.—JZ.